

Message Text

SECRET

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53

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 081219Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5152

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 0134

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SUBPARA "B" ADDED NUMBERED PARA
3)

E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, XF

SUBJECT: LEBANON AND SYRIA

SUMMARY: ALLON SAID THAT GOI HAS NO CURRENT PLANS TO INVADE
AND HOLD SOUTHERN LEBANON AND HOPES NEVER TO BE IN POSITION WHERE
IT WOULD HAVE TO DO SO. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT CURRENT SYRIAN-
LEBANESE CONSULTATIONS AND PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBER OF SYRIAN-
TRAINED TROOPS BELONGING TO SAIQA REPRESENTED POTENTION THREAT
TO LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AND TO ISRAEL. ALLON ASIAD IT WS IMPERATIVE
THAT LEBANON BUILD ITS OWN " FENCE" ON LEBANESE-ISRAELI
BORDER AND ESTABLISH GOL CONTROL IN AREA. HE SAID THAT PERES'
PUBLIC WARNING WAS INTENDED TO HELP GOL RESIST SARG REQUEST TO
STATION SAIQA ELEMENTS ON ISRAELI-LEBANESE BORDER. I RECOMMEND
THAT SECRETARY CONSIDER REISING MATTER WITH ALLON WITH
EMPHASIS ON ROLE WHICH ISRAEL ITSELF CAN PLAY INREDUCING
TENSION ON NORTHERN BORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. IN COURSE CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN ALLON ON JAN 7, I
ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ON REPORTS OF LEBANESE-SYRIAN MILITARY

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COOPERATION, PARTICULARLY IN CONTEXT ASSAD VISIT. I ALSO ASKED

FOR HIS COMMENTS ON STATEMENT BY DEFMIN PERES OF "SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES" IF SYRIAN ARMY ENTERED SOUTHERN LEBANON WHICH IMPLIED GOI PREPARED TO TAKE STRONGER MILITARY ACTION THERE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. I NOTD IN THIS RESPECT THAT SOME OBSERVERS WRE REMARKING THAT GOI WAS LOOKING FOR EXCUSE TO INVADE AND OCCUPY SOUTHERN LEBANON, A MOST WORRISOMEAND DNAGEROUS PROSPECT, IF TURE.

2. ALLON BEGAINREPLY BY ASKING QUESTION, " HOW LONG CAN LEBANON LAST" UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. HE REFERRED TO TRADITIONAL SYRIAN IRREDNTISM RE LEBANON (AND PALESTINEN), BUT BELIEVED SRYAISN WOULD NOT DAE TO OPENLY INVADE DUE TO ARAB AND WORLD PRESSURES. NEVERTHELESS, FACT REMAINED THAT THERE WERE NOW LARGE NUMBERS OF SYRIAN-TRAINED TOOPS--WHICH HE IDENTIFIED AS ELEMENTS OF SAIQA--IN SOUTHER LEBANON. HE DREW CAREFULE DISTINCTION BETWEEN " SYRIAN-TRAINED"AND "SYRIAN" TROOPS, WHILE THEN BLURRING LINES BY CLAIMING OFFICER AND NOC'S OF REGULAR SYRIAN ARMY WER SECONDED TO SAIQA TROOPS WITH INFERENCE THEY WERE ALOS IN LEBANON. HE ADDED THAT SAIQA WAS HIGHLY DISCIPLINED ANDRESPONSIVE COMPLETELY TO DAMASCUS. ANY TERRORIST ACTS PERPETRAED BY SAIQA IN ISRAEL, THEREFORE, WOULD HAVE OFFICIAL SARG SANCTION, ALLON DID NOT ELABORATE ON THIS, NO DID HE SUGGEST IN ANY WAY THAT GOI WOULD HOLD DAMASCUS RESPONSIBLE IN SENSE OF RETAILIATION IN SYRIA. HE DID NO MENTION THIS AGAIN,RATHER IT WAS OMINOUSLY LEFT HANGIN IN CONVERSATION, (WE WOUL NOT THAT, AS PREPOTED TEL AVIV 119,DEFMIN PERES AND ISRELI PRESS HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO PLA UNITS, WILE ALLON REFERRED ONLY TO SAIQA ELEMENTS).

3. PRESENCE OF THESE NEW TROOPS POSES TWO THREATS, ACCORDING TO ALLON:

(A) THREAT TO LEBANON, IN THIS REPSECT, ALLON RECALLED SITUATION IN SEPT 1970 IN JORDAN. ALLON SAID HE HONESTLY THOUGHT THAT UNTIL THE PRSENT, GOL COULD HAVE EFFECTIVELY IMPEDED TERRORIST MOVEMENTS INTO ISRAEL BY CLOSER BORDER CONTROL. HE FEARS , HOWEVER,THAT IN A FEW MONTH, INCREASED INPUT OF SYRIAN-BACKED FORCES WOULD SHIFT BALANCE DECISIVELY AGAINST GOL. THIS IS SERIOUS CONCERN FOR ISRAEL, SINCE, WITH ALL ITS WEAKNESSES, CURRENT GOVERNEMTN IN BEIRUT IS CERTAINLY PREFERABLE FROM GOI POIN OF VIEW TO ANY SUCCESSOR REGIME BACKED BY THE PALESTINE GUERRILLAS AND DAMASCUS.

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(B) THREAT TO ISRAEL. SHOULD SYRAIN PRESENCE IN SOUTHER LEBANON INCREASE, THIS WOULD PUT GREAT PRESSURE ON GOI FOR MOREAND BIGGER INCURSIONS.

4. AT THIS POINT, ALLON EMPHASIZED THAT GOI HAS NO CURRENT PLANS TO INVADE AND HOLD SOUTHER LEBANON AND HOPES NEVER TO BE PUT IN POSITION TO MAKE AND IMPLEMENT SUCH PLANS.

5. ALLON THEN STATED IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR GOL TO TAKE STEPS NOW TO BUILD ITS OWN " FENCE" ALONG BORDER, PATROL IT, AND TELL TERRORISTS "NOT TO OPERATE". (PRESUMABLY , THIS WOULD ASSUME LEBANESE DECISION NOT TO AGREE TO STATIONING OF SYRIAN TROOPS AOR SYRIAN-BACKED TROOPS IN SOTUH). UNLESS GOL CONTRL ESTABLISHED SOON, AND IF TROOPS CAME IN FROM SYRIAN, SOUTHERN LEBANON WOULD BECOME "NO MAN'S LAND" ON PATTERN FO EAST ANK PRIOR TO SEPT 1970. HE REPEATED THAT ISRAELIS HAVE NO DESIRE TO SE THIS HAPPEN AND CERTAINLY WRE AGINS INVADING AREA CONCERNED. HE CLAIMED IDF BASICALLY IN DEFENSIVE POSTURE ON BORDER AND HOPED REMAIN THUS. ALLON REITERATED NEED FOR BEIRUT TO ACT FAST.

6. AS CONCERNS PERES STATEMENTS, ALLON SAID FRANKLY IT WAS A "PUBLIC WARNING" DESIGNED TO HELP GOL RESIST POSSIBLE ASSAD REQUEST RE STATIONING SAIRA ELEMENTS ALONG BORDER. ALLON EXPRESSED SOME DOUBTS THAT ASSAD WOULD ACTUALLY PRESS TO PUT MEN IN PLACE SINCE " HE IS MORE OF A STATESMAN THAN IS USUALLY BELIEVED". (A RARE ISRAELI ADMISSION*) NEVERTHELESS, ISRAEL HAD TO BE ON SAFE SIDE, HE SAID, HENCE PERES REMARKS. ALLON THEN RECALLED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD MADE SAME KIND OF STATEMENT IN SEPT 1970 AIMED AT SYRIAN ARMOR CROSSING INTO JORDAN. THI, PLUS A FEW JUDICIOUS AND OBVIOUS ISRAELI MILITARY MOVEMENTS, AND THE SYRIANS HAD WITHDRAWN.

7. COMMENT: ALLON WAS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED BY DANGEROUS POTENTIAL INHERENT IN LARGE-SCALE SYRIAN PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON . IT WAS TYPICAL, HOWEVER THAT HE NEVER SUGGESTED THAT ISRAEL BY ITS ACTIONS--OR LACK THEREOF--MIGHT INFLUENCE BEIRUT'S DECISIONS. THE MONKEY IS SQUARELY ON LEBANESE BACK, IN JERUSALEM'S VIEW.

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8. AT END OF OUR HOUR AND 15 MINUTE CONVERSATION ON VARIETY OF TOPICS, I ASKED ALLON IF THERE WAS ANYTHING PARTICULAR ON HIS MIND THAT HE WISHED TO HAVE ME COMMUNICATE TO THE SECRETARY ON EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FROM ISRAEL FOR U.S. (HE LEAVES JAN 9). ALLON IMMEDIATELY RETURNED TO SUBJECT OF LEBANON AND STATED HE HAD THIS SITUATION UPPERMOST ON HIS MIND AND WOULD URGE SECRETARY TO USE U.S. INFLUENCE WITH LEBANESE TO KEEP LARGE-SCALE SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE OUT OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. I PROMISED I WOULD COMMUNICATE THIS REQUEST PROMPTLY TO SECRETARY.

9. I SUGGEST SECRETARY TAKE INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS ENTIRE SUBJECT WITH ALLON WITH AIM OF IMPRESSING UPON HIM FACT THAT GOI HAS IMPORTANT-- IF NOT DECISIVE--INFLUENCE BY ITS RETALIATION POLICY ON THE FUTURE OF SYRIAN-- LEBANESE MILITARY COOPERATION. WE WILL TAKE

APPROPRIATE OCCASIONS TO MAKE SAME POINT HERE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, BORDER INCIDENTS, MILITARY AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV00134
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750007-0620
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750168/aaaachnb.tel
Line Count: 171
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUL 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON AND SYRIA SUMMARY: ALLON SAID THAT GOI HAS NO CURRENT PLANS TO INVADE
TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE, XF, SY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006